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# THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR: ITS LESSONS FOR GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES.

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"UNITED SERVICE MAGAZINE."

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It has long been recognized in the United Kingdom that the defence of the British Empire is a naval much more than a military question: first, because the loss of Sea Power would involve starvation for the inhabitants of the British Isles, and, secondly, because it would preclude the possibility of sending military reinforcements to defend Colonial territories and Dependencies. In the case of the United States, however, it is but recently that an awakening to the importance of Sea Power has taken place. Beaten at sea, the United States would eventually be vanquished, not so completely, indeed, as Great Britain in like circumstances, but, nevertheless, sufficiently. The United States could not be starved, but could be brought to the verge of bankruptcy by a prolonged interruption of foreign trade.

Recognizing the importance of possessing naval strength, the people of the United States have wisely determined, not only to increase the fleet, but also to construct the Panama Canal, so as to facilitate speedy concentration upon either coast of the American continent. So far, so good. Invasion of United States territory is clearly impossible (even if it were not otherwise beyond the strength of any Power in the world), provided that the United States navy is victorious. The question of an incursion over the Canadian frontier need not be considered, because war with Great Britain is a contingency that may be dismissed, not so much because "blood is thicker than water," as because the intimate community of interests would render such a war highly unpopular in both countries; and, further, because neither branch of the Anglo-Saxon race has any desire to gratify the enemies of

both by indulging in a fratricidal struggle. Mexico may also be disregarded. Similarly, so long as the British navy commands the sea, no part of the British Empire, except India, stands in any serious danger of invasion, Canada, for the reasons already stated, being almost absolutely safe.

Thus to Great Britain, and also to the United States, Sea Power is the bed-rock of national security. But a building offers only a very imperfect habitation, however secure its foundations, if its walls are insecure and its roof unsound. Such, however, is the strategical nakedness of the two richest countries in the world.

It is not, I think, stretching imagination too far to suggest that Great Britain or the United States, or the two in alliance, might not impossibly have found it necessary to attempt the part now being so well sustained by Japan in the Far East. Under any of the conditions named, the fate of the Russian fleet would have been much the same. British or American torpedo-boats would have been as daringly and skilfully handled as were the Japanese, and probably with the same promptitude. Moreover, the results of the action at sea, which followed the sortie of the Russian fleet from Port Arthur, would have been more immediately disastrous to the latter, because, unlike the Japanese, the British or Americans, having other ships in reserve, could have afforded to close upon their opponents in a finally decisive action, and would certainly have done so. But afterwards?

Will any sane person upon either side of the Atlantic venture to assert that Great Britain or the United States, or even those two Powers in alliance, could, under existing conditions, have put in the field an army capable of doing what has been done by the Japanese? I trow not. The utmost that an allied Anglo-American army could have achieved would have been the defence of the neck of Korea, if happily it could have arrived in time to forestall the Russians. As for a prosecution of the offensive into Manchuria and the military siege of Port Arthur, we should no more have been equal to such a task than we would be to capture Berlin or Paris. Neither of us has an army. That is the plain truth. It is all very well to boast of the thousands who volunteered for service in the Philippines and in South Africa; we must not forget that those volunteers who so eagerly flocked to the front were not, as a rule, very long about clamoring to be

sent home again. Nor must we deceive ourselves by supposing that our volunteer troops were, in either case, fit to fight the stubborn battalions of Kuropatkin. The handfuls of British and American regulars would have been expended before long; and we should have had no troops at our disposal wherewith to replace them, except a circling stream of volunteers, returning home as soon as they had become fit to fight.

Americans talk stoutly enough of their determination to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, indirectly as well as directly. But is it so certain that the military power is in hand for the purpose?

Great Britain talks similarly of defeating any Russian attempt on India by reinforcing her army in that country, and also operating upon the flank of the invaders, by virtue of Sea Power. Theoretically, this sounds simple enough; but, practically, success is by no means assured, because there is no apparent reason why Russia should not be represented by an army far stronger than Great Britain has at present the smallest hope of encountering successfully. A few hundreds of miles of railways (built, very likely, to a great extent with British capital) in Persia, and the troops of the Tsar might be massed on the northwest frontier of India in hundreds of thousands.

America has emerged from her shell and asserted herself as a World Power; but her potentialities on land are unequal to the position which she has assumed. So, also, it is with Great Britain. In both cases, there are fleets that would buzz round like angry bees, and sting hard enough, no doubt; but the naval sting having been victoriously applied, there would thenceforward be no power wherewith to prosecute the original success. That such conditions should be permitted to prevail, by two peoples who pretend to much common sense and also to no little patriotic fervor, is to my mind incomprehensible. On both sides of the Atlantic, Jingo songs are enthusiastically sung in the music-halls, upon the slightest provocation; but that the individual citizen owes any duty of personal service to the State does not enter into the minds of one in a hundred of those who sing.

Both of us have our Militia and Volunteers enlisted only for that hollow sham, "Home Defence." What would it profit the United States to have 5,000,000 National Guards breathing defiance against invaders who had no intention of invading—not being fools; or what would it profit the United Kingdom if 5,000,-

000 Volunteers were similarly inviting the enemy to come on if he dare? Nonsense! If the day ever comes when either the United States or Great Britain is reduced to defending home territory with land forces, it will mean that the naval power has been broken, and the sponge may as well go up at once. Great Britain might hold out for three months, or the United States for three years; but the end, in either case, would be a proportionately increased measure of misfortune.

It is commonly said that neither Great Britain nor the United States would allow the destruction of the other. Perhaps not; yet, if the one were first to be defeated, the other might possibly be unequal to restoring the balance. Such questions, however, are outside my present purpose. *Defence*, in both our cases, is a naval matter; Great Britain has already a tremendous fleet, and the United States is engaged in creating one. Let it be granted that Great Britain is now invincible at sea, that the United States will in due course be the same, and that a quarrel between the two is impossible. The fact still remains that "ironclads cannot climb hills," and that either country might be engaged in a war, such as that now being waged by Japan, in which, without a large army, matters could not be pushed to a satisfactory issue.

The "free-born Englishman," like the "free-born American," appears to treasure, as one of his most highly prized liberties, his immunity from any legal obligation to defend his country by the only efficient means—attacking the enemy. Each maintains a small regular army, which is expected to support, vicariously, the burden of national defence which the bulk of the citizens decline to touch with one of their fingers. Trusting that our hearths and homes are safe, we shut our eyes to everything else. The danger to Great Britain is greater than to the United States; but, to each in its degree, the sufferings caused by a prolonged state of war would be immense, no matter how successful the navy might have been in sinking, capturing or blockading the hostile fleets.

Let us suppose a fulfilment of the evident desire of Germany for a coalition with France and Russia, with a view to a mutually agreeable settlement of the Far Eastern question. It is quite clear that Great Britain, in such an event, is bound by treaty to range herself upon the side of Japan, and that her potentialities would be limited almost entirely to naval operations. The French

and German fleets in European waters would give the British Navy ample occupation, for some time at all events; and, meanwhile, it is by no means certain—assuming the Russian Baltic Fleet to be still undefeated—that the French and German ships in the East would not counterbalance the British Pacific Squadron; in short, an Anglo-Japanese naval disaster is within the bounds of possibility. Needless to say, the Japanese armies in Manchuria would then be in a very dangerous situation.

Should the final result of the war be unfavorable to the Anglo-Japanese forces, it is easy to foresee the result. The Far Eastern markets would become close preserves of Russia and Germany, and those two Powers would fling some fair-sized bone to France, the assistance of the French being no longer required. Does the United States seriously imagine that any regard would be shown for her interests in those regions? None whatever, beyond what she might be able to protect at the sword's point—that is to say, none at all. Great Britain having been disposed of, the United States would become impotent; and, obviously, the converse is no less true. The law of self-preservation, consequently, demands that Great Britain and the United States should, without avoidable delay, declare their joint intention to prevent the exercise of any exclusive influences, by any Power or Powers, in the Far East; let it be, by all means, a “Self-denying Ordinance”—in a word, the policy of the “Open Door.” There is no need whatever for the two countries to enter into the entanglement of a general alliance; but it is, I think, imperative that they should combine their forces in the Far East in defence of the very similar interests that are vital to both of them. We may be certain of this, that if Great Britain, or the United States, stands by whilst one of them is being overmatched, the turn of the other will follow soon after.

France is now on very friendly terms with Great Britain, and is traditionally a friend of the United States; but the French are an honorable people, and, whatever and wherever their real sympathies, we need be under no delusion as to the certainty of France's fulfilling to the letter her treaty obligations to Russia. A general conflagration would be easily enough kindled, and could not be quenched without great losses to the world at large. What is most needed is that the owner of every political box of matches that could be employed for the purpose shall be made thoroughly

aware of the consequences to himself, should he venture to use one of them—namely, all the punishment that Great Britain and the United States might be able to give him.

Meanwhile, let us, on both sides of the Atlantic, begin earnestly to set our military houses in such order that, if unhappily we find ourselves called upon to fight, our opponents shall have good cause to regret having forced us into the field. Without strong armies we cannot fully prevail, and neither in Great Britain nor in the United States is there at present an army, available for oversea service, of anything approaching to the necessary strength. Both of us are commercial nations, desirous of remaining at peace; and, for that very reason, it behooves us to be so strong that none will venture to take liberties with us.

A. W. A. POLLOCK.